

# COUNTY OF YORK

## MEMORANDUM

**DATE:** August 4, 2004 (8/17/04 BOS Mtg.)  
**TO:** York County Board of Supervisors  
**FROM:** James O. McReynolds, County Administrator  
**SUBJECT:** *Children at Play* Sign Request

The attached letter from Ms. Nicole Odom and the accompanying petition requests that a Children at Play sign be installed along the end of Dare Road (beyond the Link Road intersection). The signatures on the petition represent nineteen (19) of the approximately forty (40) developed properties along this segment of Dare Road and the intersecting streets (Edith Lane and Old House Point).

Section 33.1-210.2 of the Code of Virginia authorizes the governing body of any county to request that the Virginia Department of Transportation install appropriate signage alerting motorists that children may be playing nearby. In accordance with this Code section, VDOT has established a policy governing the installation and maintenance of “Watch for Children” signs. The following summarizes the process that VDOT has established:

- The request must be submitted by the County to the Resident Engineer and must be in the form of a Resolution adopted by the Board of Supervisors;
- The Resolution must include an indication of the funding source that the County desires be used for the sign installation. The source of funding can be from:
  - The County’s Secondary System construction allocations;
  - From direct contributions or grants (e.g., contributions by a homeowners association or group of property owners) made for such purpose to the governing body; or
  - From such other sources as may be provided by the governing body.In any event, the cost of maintaining the signs will be paid out of VDOT’s Secondary System maintenance allocations to the County.
- The Resolution must include the desired location(s) where the signs are to be erected, although VDOT reserves the right to make the final determination as to numbers and locations.

Over the past several years, staff has received a number of inquiries from neighborhood associations and individuals concerning this type of warning sign. In most cases, these

inquiries have come from developments where the homeowners association owns common open space at the community entrance or along the main streets leading into the development. Staff's advice in those instances has been that the homeowners association consider erecting its own sign(s) at locations of its choosing on its common property. For example, inquiries from Foxwood, The Greenlands, Villages of Kiln Creek, and Prospect Park have been responded to in this manner.

The attached petition is unique in two ways. First, it is from an area that has no established homeowners association nor commonly owned open space along the road rights-of-way. Second, and more concerning, it is the first that has involved a report of a child being hit by a vehicle. As noted by Ms. Odom, the end of Dare Road is experiencing development activity as a result of the extension of public sewer service to the area. Also, since there is no turnaround, vehicles must either back up or turn in private driveways, and in both situations may have limited sight distance.

Staff believes that the Board's support for installation of this type of sign should be limited to situations with documented safety problems. Most any neighborhood has children at play and under a broad application of this policy might expect support for such signs. However, this scenario could lead to a proliferation of signs and, while perhaps not an enormous impact, the costs of installation and maintenance would diminish the amount of construction and maintenance funds available for other needs. Related to the issue of sign proliferation is the fact that no amount of signage will make a street an appropriate "playground" for children. In that vein, staff believes it is important not to support requests that give the false impression that streets are able to be used in that manner or that are depended on as a substitute for conveying important safety lessons to children.

One way to partially address the cost issues would be to require the signs to be privately funded (i.e., through a payment by the neighborhood or group of citizens requesting the sign). Staff recommends that any request approved for a neighborhood with an established homeowners association should include a condition that the homeowners association fund the cost of sign fabrication and installation. However, in this and other cases where there is no formal property owners association, staff recommends that the Board request VDOT to fund the fabrication and installation (approximately \$200/sign) from the Secondary System allocations.

### Recommendation

Because of the increase in traffic associated with new development, the characteristics of this portion of Dare Road and the recent incident involving a vehicle striking a 2-year old child, I recommend that the Board adopt proposed Resolution No. R04-129 to formally

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request that the Virginia Department of Transportation install a *Watch for Children* sign on Dare Road just east of its intersection with Link Road.

Carter/3337:jmc

Attachments:

- Letter from Nicole Odom, with petition attached
- Vicinity Map
- Proposed Resolution No. R04-129